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Pattern of conferences

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains information on matters relating to conference management pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 68/251 of 27 December 2013 and 32/72 of 9 December 1977 and other relevant mandates. Information is summarized to the extent possible in order to keep the report succinct and within the word limit. Statistical data are provided as supplementary information.[a] The electronic version of the Committee's documents is available from https://meetings.un.org/en/ga/coc.

[a] See http://coc.dgacm.org/2014/Documents/2014_Supplementary_Information.pdf.

* A/69/50.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 32/72 of 9 December 1977, the General Assembly set forth the following terms of reference for the Committee on Conferences:

(a) To advise the General Assembly on the calendar of conferences;

(b) To act on behalf of the General Assembly in dealing with departures from the approved calendar of conferences that have administrative and financial implications;

(c) To recommend to the General Assembly means to provide the optimum apportionment of conference resources, facilities and services, including documentation, in order to ensure their most efficient and effective use;

(d) To advise the General Assembly on the current and future requirements of the Organization for conference services, facilities and documentation;

(e) To advise the General Assembly on means to ensure improved coordination of conferences within the United Nations system, including conference services and facilities, and to conduct appropriate consultations in that regard.

2. The present report focuses on the above-mentioned elements and presents the related efforts of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, and the results achieved.

3. The Committee on Conferences plays an important role by looking closely at the continued ability of the Secretariat to facilitate the orderly and effective conduct of the deliberations and follow-up actions of the General Assembly, its Main Committees and various subsidiary organs, the Economic and Social Council and most of its subsidiary bodies, as well as special United Nations conferences.

II. Meetings management

A. Calendar of conferences and meetings

1. Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985

4. Requests to meet during the sixty-ninth regular session of the General Assembly have been received from the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), the intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations, the Specialized Agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Board of Auditors, the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and the

Committee on Relations with the Host Country (see supplementary information,[1] sect. I). In accordance with established practice, the requests will be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences for recommendation to the General Assembly.

2. Draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2015

5. During its substantive session, in September 2014 the Committee on Conferences will review the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2015 (A/AC.172/2014/L.2) and transmit its recommendations to the General Assembly in its report for 2014 (to be issued as A/69/32, annexes I and II).

3. Intersessional departures

6. In July 2013, the Committee approved a request by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for eight additional meetings to complete the work of its 2013 spring session. The Committee on Conferences also approved the requests received in 2014 from the Advisory Committee to extend its 2014 winter session by five days and to hold a further 14 meetings outside of regular meeting hours.

7. The Committee approved a request received in 2014 from the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters to change the venue of its sixty-second session in July 2014 from New York to Geneva. The Committee also approved a request received in 2014 from the Advisory Board to change the venue of its sixty-third session in January 2015 from New York to Geneva.

8. The Committee also approved a request received in 2014 from the Commission on the Status of Women for an additional meeting during its fifty-eighth session, and from the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing for four additional meetings to complete its work during its fourth session, as well as requests received in 2014 from the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation for two additional organizational meetings for its eighteenth session.

9. The Committee also approved a request received in 2014 for an additional plenary meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, for it to adopt a consensus text of an outcome document of the Conference.

B. Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

1. Analysis of meeting performance indicators of United Nations organs

10. The utilization factor by duty station for the past three years is summarized in table 1 below, while the details by body for the past three years on the utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies that met in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi is presented in section II, table 1, of the supplementary information. The overall utilization factor for meetings at all four duty stations in 2013 is 82 per cent, which, although above the established benchmark of 80 per cent, shows a decrease of 2 percentage points from 84 per cent in 2012. The percentage of unassigned cancelled meetings in New York increased to 9 per cent in

[1] Available from http://coc.dgacm.org/2014/Documents/2014_Supplementary_Information.pdf.

2013 from 8 per cent in 2012. Overall, the time lost as a result of late starts and early endings increased to 13 per cent in 2013 compared to 12 per cent in 2012.

Table 1
Utilization factor by number of meetings of bodies in the core sample by duty station

	Number of meetings, 2013						*Utilization factor (percentage)*	
Duty station	*A (programmed)*	*B (added)*	*C (cancelled)*	*D (held)*	*E (reassigned)* [a]	*F (minutes lost)*	*2013*	[b]
New York	1 202	80	225	1 057	112	29 500	78	
Geneva	535	26	13	548	2	7 760	90	
Vienna	198	1	6	193	–	3 840	86	
Nairobi	42	8	2	48	–	1 320	81	
Total	**1 977**	**115**	**246**	**1 846**	**114**	**42 420**	**82**	

	Number of meetings, 2012						*Utilization factor (percentage)*	
Duty station	*A (programmed)*	*B (added)*	*C (cancelled)*	*D (held)*	*E (reassigned)* [a]	*F (minutes lost)*	*2012*	[b]
New York	1 162	50	196	1 016	101	28 810	79	
Geneva	641	22	5	658	–	7 945	93	
Vienna	169	–	3	166	–	2 895	89	
Nairobi	26	–	–	26	–	370	92	
Total	**1 998**	**72**	**204**	**1 866**	**101**	**40 020**	**84**	

	Number of meetings, 2011						*Utilization factor (percentage)*	
Duty station	*A (programmed)*	*B (added)*	*C (cancelled)*	*D (held)*	*E (reassigned)* [a]	*F (minutes lost)*	*2011*	[b]
New York	1 297	44	181	1 160	104	32 30 615	82	76
Geneva	701	13	14	700	–	9 920	90	
Vienna	188	–	2	186	–	3 335	89	
Nairobi	27	2	–	29	–	595	89	
Total	**2 213**	**59**	**197**	**2 075**	**104**	**44 465**	**85**	

[a] Related reassignments.
[b] Utilization factor, counting only related reassignments.

11. The decreasing trend in the utilization factor of the core sample of bodies in New York has resulted from a combination of two factors, namely, increased cancellations and increased time loss due to late starts and early endings. Furthermore, not only has the absolute number of cancellations increased, but the number of last-minute cancellations has increased as well, allowing fewer resources

to be reassigned to other meetings. Globally, the number of cancellations in 2013 reached a historical high. That trend has been especially prevalent in New York, where 225 meetings were cancelled. The number of meetings added at all four duty stations was also at its highest in the past three years.

12. Since the start of 2014, the Secretariat has been taking proactive measures to address the situation by working closely and maintaining an active dialogue with the calendar bodies before, during and after their sessions to identify and address any issues that may affect their utilization of conference servicing resources. The results of the new round of strengthened coordination efforts by the Secretariat will be reflected in statistical reports for core sample bodies for 2014 and in the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences for 2015.

13. The reassignment of resources from cancelled meetings to other meetings in New York has made it possible to accommodate a large volume of requests from bodies entitled to meet "as required" (see paragraph 23 below). Similarly, in Geneva, cancelled meetings of mandated bodies and programme changes have had a detrimental effect on capacity utilization, as interpretation services cannot be advanced or stored for later use. When such instances occur, every effort has been made to ensure that the resources are reassigned in a timely manner, ensuring that all meetings entitled to and requesting interpretation are fully serviced.

14. Data on meetings programmed and held at the four duty stations, including the core sample, are shown in section II, table 8, of the supplementary information.

15. Pursuant to paragraph 29, of General Assembly resolution 68/251 of 27 December 2013, the Secretariat identified four core sample bodies, all meeting in New York, as having a utilization factor below 80 per cent for the past three consecutive years. Those bodies, identified in section II, table 1.A, of the supplementary information, are: the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund; the Committee on Contributions; the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group; and the Committee on Information. The 10-year averages of the bodies are also below the 80 per cent benchmark, as described in paragraph 18 below.

16. The Chair of the Committee on Conferences met in June 2014 with representatives of the Committee on Contributions, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group and the Committee on Information. Although the mandate of the Chair relates to the previous three sessions, each of the bodies had already completed their main session for 2014, and the additional information aided the discussion. Each of the three bodies had made significant improvements in 2014 and were encouraged to continue to employ the same and additional measures in the future to achieve optimum utilization. During the reporting period, the Chair of the Committee on Conferences had not yet had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund.

17. In 2013, there were no bodies in the core sample at the Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi duty stations whose utilization factor fell below the benchmark of 80 per cent for each of the previous three consecutive years. As can be seen in table 1 above, Geneva has increased the maximum utilization of meeting services in recent years through the successful continued coordination between the meetings services

and the secretariats in their effort to address and service the expanding needs for meetings services, both with and without interpretation.

18. The following eight New York-based intergovernmental bodies have their 10-year average utilization factor (2004-2013) for mandated sessions below the 80 per cent benchmark (see sect. II, tables 9 and 10, of the supplementary information):

(1) Statistical Commission (79 per cent average);

(2) United Nations Children's Fund, Executive Board (79 per cent average);

(3) Commission for Social Development (76 per cent average);

(4) Committee on Population and Development (74 per cent average);

(5) Committee on Contributions (71 per cent average);

(6) Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group (67 per cent average);

(7) Committee on Information (64 per cent average); and

(8) Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on Strengthening of the Role of the Organization (59 per cent average).

19. Through bilateral consultations with the above bodies, the Secretariat identified specific measures to improve utilization of resources in the future. Those interactions have shown that there is a genuine desire on the part of the chairpersons and secretariats of the bodies to make the best use of the conference services provided to them, and the preliminary results in 2014 are encouraging. For example, the Statistical Commission, the Committee on Population and Development, the Committee on Social Development, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Committee on Information, which have concluded their sessions early in the year, have responded by reducing their meeting services requests and have shown marked improvements in their utilization factors. The Committee on Contributions has achieved remarkable utilization of 88 per cent in 2014, up from 71 per cent in 2011, 61 per cent in 2012 and 71 per cent in 2013.

20. The Secretariat conference managers fully appreciate the complicated and unpredictable nature of the intergovernmental processes and the limited value of one single quantitative indicator as the measure of performance. They respect the judgment of the presiding officers and are mindful that the efforts to enhance utilization of conference resources must not prejudice the substantive work of the meeting bodies.

21. Since 2013, meeting services reports have been sent to the presiding officers and the secretariats of all calendar bodies before and immediately after their scheduled sessions. Such reports provide statistical data on the utilization factor for the previous 10 years and include suggestions for improvement whenever necessary. Client feedback is actively sought to help identify specific ways to improve the utilization factor.

22. The planning accuracy factor at the four duty stations is shown in table 2 below (see also supplementary information, sect. II, table 6). Two factors have adversely affected the index, namely, the continued increase of additions to meetings programmed and the continued increase of cancellations of programmed

percentage (see also section III, tables 1 and 2 of the supplementary information). The marked increase in the number of requests since 2011 is partly due to the fact that, in 2011, the then-meetings management system, eMeets, now replaced by gMeets, did not capture the requests from the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council and the plenary meetings and informal consultations of the General Assembly, two main clients for such requests. Others include the Peacebuilding Commission and the Economic and Social Council, and occasionally the extended meetings of the Security Council.

Table 3

Comparative analysis of the provision of conference services for bodies entitled to meet "as required" in New York and Geneva

	Meetings with interpretation services				*Meetings without interpretation services*		
Duty station	*Requested*	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Percentage provided*	*Requested*	*Held*	*Percentage held*
New York							
2013	921	899	22	98	420	420	100
2012	687	664	23	97	411	411	100
2011	577	553	24	96	562	562	100
Geneva							
2013	32	32	–	100	–	–	–
2012	54	54	–	100	–	–	–
2011	59	59	–	100	–	–	–

2. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

24. Table 4 below and section IV of the supplementary information summarize the provision of conference services to regional and other groupings of Member States at the four duty stations for 2013. In New York, the status is slightly higher than that of 2012, and 4 per cent higher than that of 2011. In Geneva, the numbers of requests and provided services were lower than those of the previous years. Although the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi do not usually receive requests to provide interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, both Offices are able to provide such groups with such services whenever they have the capacity. In 2013, the two duty stations met two and five such requests, respectively.

Table 4

Comparative analysis of the provision of conference services for meetings of regional and other major groupings

A. 2013

	Meetings with interpretation services				*Meetings without interpretation services*		
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Percentage provided*	*Requested*	*Held*	*Percentage held*
New York	165	158	7	96	815	815	100
Geneva	37	30	7[a]	81	595	595	100
Vienna	2	2	–	100	345	345	100
Nairobi	5	5	–	100	506	506	100
Total	**209**	**195**	**14**	**93**	**2 261**	**2 261**	**100**

[a] Of the 37 requests for meetings with interpretation services, 6 were denied and held without interpretation services and 1 was cancelled by the client.

B. 2012

	Meetings with interpretation services				*Meetings without interpretation services*		
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Percentage provided*	*Requested*	*Held*	*Percentage held*
New York	163	155	8	95	942	942	100
Geneva	116	98	18	84	626	626	100
Vienna	1	1	–	100	359	359	100
Nairobi	1	1	–	100	268	268	100
Total	**281**	**255**	**26**	**91**	**2 195**	**2 195**	**100**

C. 2011

	Meetings with interpretation services				*Meetings without interpretation services*		
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Percentage provided*	*Requested*	*Held*	*Percentage held*
New York	184	169	15	92	1 010	1 010	100
Geneva	85	76	9	89	718	718	100
Vienna	–	–	–	–	317	317	100
Nairobi	1	1	–	100	252	252	100
Total	**270**	**246**	**24**	**91**	**2 297**	**2 297**	**100**

3. Utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

25. In 2013, in accordance with several resolutions of the General Assembly, including paragraph 22 of resolution 68/251, all meetings of Nairobi-based bodies were held in Nairobi, in conformity with the headquarters rule.

4. Utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa

26. In 2013, the United Nations Conference Centre hosted and serviced 3,644 meetings, representing an occupancy rate of 67.4 per cent, based on the revised calculation methodology, which was adjusted after a fact-finding mission carried out by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to Headquarters in April 2014. The occupancy rates for the previous three years have also been adjusted based on the methodology, as follows: 2011 to 88.1 per cent; 2012 to 80.5 per cent; and 2013 to 67.4 per cent. The decrease of 13.1 per cent for 2013 as compared to 2012 is due to the renovation exercise currently under way at the Conference Centre. The renovation has led to the closure of some of the highly demanded medium-sized conference rooms, which only reopened in March 2014.

27. The Conference Centre has also prepared a comprehensive marketing and pricing strategy, as recommended by the Board of Auditors in A/61/5 (Vol. I), chapter II and by the General Assembly in paragraph 26 of its resolution 68/251. Certain actions of the new marketing strategy, which will be implemented in 2014, have already enabled the Conference Centre to witness a gradual improvement in its monthly occupancy, which was 60.56 per cent in June 2014. It is hoped that the occupancy rate will show a substantial increase by the end of 2014, despite the growing competition in Addis Ababa.

28. As part of its more proactive marketing activities, the Conference Centre has increased participation in key conference centre exhibitions. As a result, it was able to secure new conference commitments for 2014 and 2015. The Conference Centre is targeting new clients in the Middle East and the Americas and boosting its advertising campaign, including by placing advertisements in key airline magazines and widely read newspapers. In Ethiopia, the Conference Centre has embarked on a wide sensitization campaign in local media, aimed at changing the general perception of the Conference Centre as a venue only accessible to the United Nations family and international organizations. The Executive Secretary of ECA has made an official request to all Executive Heads of United Nations agencies in Ethiopia to consider the Conference Centre as their first option for holding meetings and events.

29. There has been an increase in partnerships with the Ethiopian tourism agency, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, major airlines and key tour operators, which will assist the Conference Centre in gradually becoming a more efficient and effective one-stop service provider. Furthermore, in 2014, with its closer partnerships with major airlines, branded hotels and selected tours operators, the Conference Centre will also begin to offer short package trips within Ethiopia and to neighbouring countries to boost its brand image.

C. Impact of the implementation of the capital master plan on meetings held at Headquarters

30. The capital master plan to renovate the Headquarters complex is now in its final phase. The migration from the North Lawn Building to the General Assembly Building began on schedule in May 2014 and is scheduled to continue until the end of August 2014, followed by a brief black-out phase in which the conference rooms and the temporary General Assembly hall in the North Lawn Building will be decommissioned and the equivalent in the General Assembly Building will be made

operational. As a result, meeting room capacity will be temporarily reduced until the reopening of the General Assembly Hall and the conference rooms in the General Assembly Building. An announcement on the reduced capacity to accommodate meetings during the capital master plan migration of conference rooms has been posted in the Journal of the United Nations and the departments, offices and programmes in the United Nations system have been duly informed. In order to minimize the impact of the capital master plan on meeting management, the Secretariat has made alternative arrangements for programmed meetings and has limited the scheduling of additional new meetings. An updated chart showing the availability of the conference rooms during the final phase is contained in section V of the supplementary information.

III. Integrated global management

A. Status report

31. In response to the request made by the General Assembly in paragraph 38 of its resolution 68/25, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna have agreed to establish a clear delineation of their responsibilities, concerning conference management policies, operations and resource utilization and accordingly to revise the current bulletins of the Secretary-General that define the organization of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Offices. The drafts of the revised bulletins are currently undergoing internal legal assessment.

32. Work is progressing on the development of single information technology systems. The meetings management system, gMeets, is operational at Headquarters and in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, with enhancements implemented as part of maintenance. The documents planning and processing system, gDoc, was launched in Geneva and New York in May 2014. The computer-assisted translation and text processing system, gText, includes four components: computer-assisted translation; machine translation; referencing; and access to the terminology databases. Its development phase has been completed and gText is being prepared for a phased roll-out at all four duty stations. The information warehouse, gData, captures conference management-related budget and finance data from the four duty stations for statistical reporting and performance management. Data on meetings and documentation will be provided through gDoc and gMeets.

33. The term "proximity rule" has been used to describe the practice of using the conference servicing resources of the four duty stations and the regional commissions to assemble in a cost-effective manner a team for servicing those meetings held away from the four duty stations, bearing in mind that the quality of services is the highest consideration. Member States and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions have requested that the term "proximity rule" be replaced with one that also captures other important considerations in addition to geographical proximity. Henceforth, the practice shall be referred to as the integrated global management rule, or "IGM rule". In 2013, the application of the IGM rule to meetings held away from the four duty stations was estimated to have led to notional savings of over $1 million. A breakdown of one cost element,

the notional savings on air tickets, is contained in section VI, table 3, of the supplementary information. Such estimates are indicative only and do not represent precise accounting or a measure of integrated global management performance. Furthermore, the figures cannot account for the administrative and organizational effort and duplication of staff associated with assembling and using resources from several duty stations. The savings generally accrue to the host countries or the substantive departments, rather than to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

34. Documentation workload sharing, as shown in table 5 below, is a means to balance the workload and processing capacity of the four duty stations. In addition to the ad hoc sharing of urgent documents, the four duty stations are progressively moving towards systematic document sharing through joint workload forecasting and capacity planning.

Table 5
Workload sharing (number of words shared)

	2009	*2010*	*2011*[a]	*2012*	*2013*
New York	N/A	140 780	4 923 310	367 781	2 677 685
Geneva	N/A	212 480	27 360	8 310	146 890
Vienna	170 224	188 563	80 751	357 855	296 734
Nairobi	92 265	34 049	–	81 091	164 450
Total	**262 489**	**577 882**	**5 031 421**	**815 037**	**3 285 759**

[a] Reflects the one-time transfer of the backlog of documentation from the United Nations Office at Geneva to New York.

B. Performance measurement

1. E-survey

35. The global e-survey was conducted from 15 April to 15 May 2014, during which time it was accessed 1,201 times. A brief analysis of the responses is summarized in table 6 below.

36. The revised survey features a new suggestion box, which, in addition to the standard ratings, allows delegates to make comments or suggestions. The feedback is routed to the relevant programme managers for review and response. If the respondent opts to provide contact information, the responses can be sent back to them. Summaries of informational meetings are posted on the same web page for transparency. The feedback page can be accessed from http://dgacm-feedback.un.int.

37. Member States in New York were asked to rate the work of the Secretaries of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly and the Secretary of the Committee on Conferences, as well as their teams, in providing conference management support in preparation of and during the session.

Table 6
Results of e-survey, 15 April-15 May 2014

	New York
Work of Committee Secretaries	Good (8.5 per cent)
Level of satisfaction with the process of submission and issuance of and action on draft resolutions	Good (8.5 per cent)
Satisfaction with the quality and content of the website of the General Assembly and of the websites of the Main Committees of the General Assembly	Good (6.4 per cent)

Criteria		*New York*	*Geneva*	*Nairobi*	*Vienna*
Quality of services provided by meeting services assistant	Professionalism	Good (8.4 per cent)	Good (4.7 per cent)	Good (8.6 per cent)	Good (6.1 per cent)
	Courtesy	Good (7.4 per cent)	Good (4.7 per cent)	Good (7.5 per cent)	Good (6.1 per cent)
Linguistic quality of translated documents	Accuracy	Good (9.6 per cent)	Good (3.6 per cent)	Very good (5.4 per cent)	Very good (3.7 per cent)
	Consistency	Good (11.7 per cent)	Good (3.6 per cent)	Good (6.5 per cent)	Very good (2.5 per cent)
	Style	Good (12.8 per cent)	Good (3.6 per cent)	Good (6.5 per cent)	Very good (2.5 per cent)
Linguistic quality of interpretation	Accuracy	Good (7.5 per cent)	Good (3.6 per cent)	Very good (5.4 per cent)	Good (1.1 per cent)
	Completeness	Good (6.4 per cent)	Satisfactory (3.6 per cent)	Good (4.4 per cent)	Good (1.1 per cent)
	Clarity	Good (6.4 per cent)	Good (3.6 per cent)	Good (5.4 per cent)	Good (1.1 per cent)
	Understandability	Good (6.4 per cent)	Very good (2.4 per cent)	Very good (4.4 per cent)	Good (1.1 per cent)
Overall quality		Good (11.6 per cent)	Good (4.8 per cent)	Good (7.6 per cent)	Good (8.7 per cent)

38. To complement the global e-survey, the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva has identified eight specific meetings or conferences at which participants will be asked to complete internal, meeting-specific surveys, while the United Nations Office at Nairobi identified three such events. A total of 174 respondents rated the overall quality of conference services, of which 39 per cent rated it as "excellent", 42 per cent rated it as "good", 8 per cent as "average" and 2 per cent as "poor".

2. Information meetings

39. Language-specific information meetings with Member States were held at all four duty stations. At Headquarters, all language functions were represented. Representatives from a total of 21 Member States participated in the meetings. A consolidated summary of the discussions was produced, translated into all six official languages of the United Nations and posted on the website of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

40. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, the meetings took place with the participation of representatives from 11 Member States and all language functions. A consolidated summary was prepared and circulated to participants.

41. The United Nations Office at Vienna convened a meeting between members of the Conference Management Service, representatives of the Vienna-based United Nations Industrial Development Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with representatives from nine Member States. The opening remarks by the Chief of the Conference Management Service were circulated as the message of the day.

42. The United Nations Office at Nairobi held two informational meetings with Member States.

3. FlexTime

43. The authority to record attendance and leave is vested on respective departments and offices, which are responsible for ensuring that the requisite mechanisms are in place for effective internal control of attendance and recording of night-time work, compensatory time off and overtime, travel time and administration of leave entitlements. Irrespective of the mechanism utilized, departments and offices are required to ensure that such mechanisms conform to the various staff rules and policies that govern the administration of attendance and leave. The FlexTime system currently used by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management does conform to the various rules and policies on recording attendance and leave.

IV. Matters related to documentation and publications

A. Documents management

44. The documents management statistics for slotted documents at all duty stations are presented in section VIII of the supplementary information. During the reporting cycle, further progress was achieved at all four duty stations in the timely submission by authoring entities of documents for processing by the conference services. The overall timely submission rate in New York reached 92 per cent (1,307 out of 1,422), although only 84 per cent (41 out of 49) of the submitters met the 90 per cent timely submission benchmark. This was because offices responsible for a small number of documents fell short. New York conference services were able to process 98 per cent of documents in a timely manner, that is, taking no more than 28 calendar days to turn around submitted documents on time and within word limits. Twenty-three manuscripts did not meet the processing benchmark, owing mainly to the competing priorities during peak times. As a result, 71 per cent of all

pre-session documents issued in New York met the mandated timely issuance benchmarks.

45. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, the timely submission rate reached 87 per cent (1,385 out of 1,603), up from 85 per cent in 2012 and 74 per cent in 2011. However, owing to capacity constraints, the timely processing rate fell to 50 per cent for Secretariat reports and 22 per cent for non-Secretariat reports in 2013, down from 55 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively, in 2012, though still twice as high as in 2011.

46. At the United Nations Office at Vienna, the timely submission rate reached 98 per cent in 2013 (159 out of 162), up from 78 per cent in 2012 and 59 per cent in 2011. The timely processing indicator was also improved. Consequently, overall issuance compliance in accordance with the mandated time frame reached 77 per cent, compared with 69 per cent in 2012 and 55 per cent in 2011.

47. At the United Nations Office at Nairobi, timely submission in 2013 stood at 22 per cent (9 out of 41). Although up on 2012 and 2011, the figure left much room for improvement. Despite registering some improvement in 2013, the compliance rate by the regular budget clients of the Office, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme continued to be low, owing to the interactive document management process and consultations between the secretariats of the Governing Councils and the Committees of Permanent Representatives, which delay the submissions of final versions of reports for processing. The Office ensured 100 per cent timely processing.

48. In 2013, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management continued its efforts to control the lengths of submitted documents without affecting their quality, through consultative waiver negotiations with authoring departments. The percentage of slotted documents complying with the word limit was 81 per cent at Headquarters, 100 per cent at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and 87 per cent at the United Nations Office at Vienna.

49. To facilitate the in-depth analysis of the reasons for delayed document submissions, the Secretary-General requested the relevant departments and offices to provide specific explanations as to why deadlines were not met. The responses received provided some insights. For example, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some of their documents were delayed owing to the late availability of related reports from the Board of Auditors, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee. Improvements suggested by UNHCR included submitting advance copies of reports for processing and changing one specific report from pre-session to in-session. In the case of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the late submission of reports was due to the increased number of mandated reports and the lack of resources to respond to that increase, which resulted in documents being prepared for processing later than expected.

50. The General Assembly, in paragraph 59 of its resolution 68/251, acknowledged that a multipronged approach was required to find a solution to the perennial difficulties related to the late issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee. For the main part of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, 83 out of 96 planned documents for the Committee, or 86 per cent, were submitted in a timely

manner. Thirty-two documents were issued as mandated, namely, six weeks before their consideration, while 21 documents were issued at least four weeks before and 26 at least two weeks before. The remaining 17 documents were issued less than two weeks before their consideration, owing to a combination of factors, such as late slotting, late submission and excessive lengths.

51. For the first part of its resumed session in 2014, the Fifth Committee considered 14 documents. Although on average the conference services took less than two weeks, instead of four, to process the documents submitted late by the authoring department, nine documents were issued less than two weeks before their deliberation dates.

52. For the second part of the resumed session in 2014, the Fifth Committee considered 50 documents, of which 45 (90 per cent) were submitted for processing in a timely manner. A total of 35 documents (70 per cent) were issued by the conference services at least six weeks before the respective meetings, while 9 were issued at least four weeks before and 6 at least two weeks before. There were no documents issued less than two weeks before the meeting.

53. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the secretariats of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions have intensified their joint efforts in analysing the situation and seeking effective solutions. Two challenges are particularly prominent in this area:

(a) The almost end-to-end, even overlapping, sessions of the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee leave little time for the drafting and processing of Advisory Committee reports for the Fifth Committee, which also affects other slotted documents;

(b) The lack of predictability of the Fifth Committee programme of work in connection with that of the Advisory Committee adversely affects the efforts by the Secretariat relating to the advance planning and accurate processing of parliamentary documentation.

54. Despite tangible improvements in timeliness achieved in recent years, late submission by authoring entities remains a problem, often compounded by the excessive lengths of documents and heavy editing needs. However, building on those improvements and enhanced sensitivity to this important issue, further remedial actions are being taken by authors and conference managers, the outcomes of which will be closely monitored.

55. In Vienna, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Subcommittee agreed that the practice of issuing unedited transcripts in lieu of summary records would be discontinued temporarily for the period 2012-2015, during which time digital recordings and a written script in English would be provided. It was agreed that, in 2015, the Legal Subcommittee at its fifty-fourth session and the Committee at its fifty-eighth session would evaluate the use of digital recordings and decide whether to develop the application further or return to using unedited transcripts. Feedback from Secretariat staff and delegates indicates a broad acceptance of the new alternative thus far, with little indication at present that there will be a push to return to the issuance of written meeting records.

56. At its forty-fifth session, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), decided, while not yet fully relinquishing its entitlement to summary records under General Assembly resolution 49/221, to request that digital recordings continue to be provided at its forty-sixth and forty-seventh sessions, in 2013 and 2014, on a trial basis (see A/67/17, para. 249). Thus, the digital recordings of the sessions of the Commission and its working groups (since 2012 and 2013, respectively) held in Vienna and New York have been provided to UNCITRAL for dissemination on its website. The Commission agreed that, at its forty-seventh session, it would assess the experience of using digital recordings and, on the basis of that assessment, take a decision regarding the possible replacement of summary records by digital recordings. It must be noted in that context that the entitlement to summary records applies to the Commission itself, not its working groups, and that the Commission has for some time forgone requesting records for the entire duration of each session, requesting instead that written records be prepared only for the key parts of the session dealing with normative texts being considered and the adoption of the report.

57. In accordance with the principle of simultaneous distribution, all official documents are only distributed when they become available in all of the official languages, both as electronic versions on the Official Documents System and in hard copy.

B. Digitization of important older United Nations documents

58. The Department of Public Information and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management are working together to increase online access to historical United Nations documents. An estimated 17 million paper documents exist in United Nations repositories, mostly from the pre-digital era before 1993. Around 3 million such documents have been identified as particularly important and in need of urgent digitization, of which around 300,000 have been digitized so far. The complementary skills and resources of both Departments have now been melded in a single team to address this challenge. The initial estimated output is 6,000 finished documents per month.

V. Matters related to translation and interpretation

A. Enhancing the capacity of language professionals

59. Agreements with the International Association of Conference Interpreters and the International Association of Conference Translators that came into force on 1 July 2012 and on 1 January 2013, respectively, rationalized the recruitment of qualified freelance language professionals needed to supplement in-house capacity, by aligning the remuneration of short-term interpreters and translators with that of regular staff. As anticipated, the new mechanisms enhanced the predictability, transparency and ease of administration of temporary staff recruitment in all duty stations and thereby improved the competiveness of the United Nations. The next steps towards enhancing the capacity of the Organization to ensure the mandated multilingualism of its parliamentary deliberations will include building a larger pool of qualified language staff by identifying promising candidates through various

means, including the revamped competitive language examination process, the Universities Outreach Programme and internships and traineeships conducted in compliance with United Nations recruitment standards regarding language staff. Given the difficulties experienced in recent years in attracting and retaining qualified language staff, the strategic importance of such an endeavour is self-evident.

60. The examination schedule has been regularized and the examination content is being updated. The language competitive examinations are planned in advance and staggered so that the most urgent exams are held earlier. The schedule of such examinations is widely advertised in order to facilitate long-term planning by interested qualified linguists and specialized schools. Vacancies related to expected retirements are advertised six months in advance in order to have the process completed in good time for an orderly handover.

61. Other measures include reviewing the conditions of recruitment of language staff, offering serving language staff increased opportunities for enhancing their skills and continuing to interact with language training institutions through the network of signatories to a memorandum of understanding developed by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management since 2007. The conference services at all four duty stations continued and further enhanced their collaboration with such academic institutions. Remote learning tools have been leveraged more actively and good practices continued to be exchanged in this area with leading international specialists in the field.

62. In 2013, the language internship programme hosted 107 interns. Table 7 below shows the return on investment in the period 2011-2013 of the staff time devoted to the language internship programme:

Table 7
Return on investment, 2011-2013

	Calendar year			
Activity	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*Total*
Total number of working days	77	119	108	304
Number of memorandum of understanding students who participated in the internship programme	27	43	43	113
Number of interns who passed the language exams	7	10	19	36
Number of former interns subsequently recruited	6	7	6	19
Days of investment per intern recruitment	12.8	17	18	47.8

63. The objectives of the outreach, as in the past, include identifying and assisting individuals with a potential to succeed on a career path leading to in-house or contractual employment as qualified language professionals; and assisting select specialized schools in training students with due understanding of the United Nations requirements and specificities. Such help is provided through direct

pedagogical assistance, including visits to schools and remote training, and through guidance to the teaching staff provided mostly remotely and at biannual memorandum of understanding network conferences. In order to ensure a sustainable influx of new talent, the objectives need to be treated as ongoing. Memorandums of understanding have been maintained with 22 universities in countries where one of the six official languages is spoken, to encourage the training of language staff and internships.

64. All language services make use of temporary assistance through the recruitment of freelance staff, including retirees, to help handle the workload during peak periods. While, for obvious economic reasons, the recruitment of local freelancers is strongly preferred, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management recruits internationally for certain language combinations if local expertise of an adequate quality is not available. Each service tailors its use of temporary assistance to its own staffing table, vacancy rate, capacity and variations in the timing of periods of high demand.

65. In order to find a long-term solution to high vacancy rates in the language services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Department has continued to take a number of steps, including:

(a) Lateral transfers from other conference-servicing duty stations to Nairobi;

(b) Regular reviews of the roster of applicants and contact with potential candidates;

(c) Approaches and offers of appointments in Nairobi to candidates who are successful in language examinations;

(d) Advertisements of all vacant posts on Inspira;

(e) Support to the pan-African project, in which the United Nations Office at Nairobi engages in partnership with the European Union, the African Union, the African Development Bank and the General Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States;

(f) Work with selected universities in Africa to accelerate the training of translators and interpreters in Africa (see A/64/6 (Sect. 2)).

66. The United Nations Office at Nairobi also continues to provide on-the-job training by giving temporary contracts to young freelance translators and interpreters who have not yet passed a United Nations competitive recruitment examination. The aforementioned efforts have yielded a number of results, including: (a) in the past four years, one interpreter, two editors and one translator have passed competitive examinations; and (b) the vacancy levels in Nairobi have improved from an overall rate of 26 per cent to 16 per cent to date. The upgrading of language posts to the P-5 level, in line with the principle of equal grade for equal work, has also had a positive impact on the vacancy rates and is expected to assist in the further reduction and retention of staff at the duty station.

67. The Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation was formally established in 2012 in Addis Ababa and includes universities from Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. The Consortium is serviced by a permanent secretariat operating from the United Nations Office at Nairobi that

ensures synergy between the partners and coordinates and advise the members on best practices.

68. Staff at the United Nations Office at Nairobi continue to assist in the training and testing of students at the University of Nairobi. Through the Consortium, the Office also assisted the African Union Commission Pan African University in the process of final placement and selection tests of candidates to be trained as translators or interpreters, by participating in the examination jury. At the end of the tests, a total of 19 students were selected and are now undergoing training at the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters in Buea, Cameroon.

69. In addition to the above-mentioned developments in Africa, the Secretariat has received expressions of interest from three universities in Peru and two in Mexico, from which it is currently awaiting formal applications for memorandum of understanding status. The applications will be considered through the established review mechanism, in which language services play the primary role.

B. Quality of interpretation and translation

70. Specific procedures apply to the quality control of translation work done externally, including:

(a) A testing process to certify that prospective contractors are duly vetted in terms of their credentials, relevant experience and performance prior to their inclusion in the relevant roster;

(b) Designated quality-control focal points in individual units responsible for advising on the allocation of assignments among contractors and selecting documents for quality control, and providing feedback to contractors, in addition to completing assessments to be entered into the record of individual contractors;

(c) The full revision of work performed by contractors retained as translators rather than at the self-reviser level;

(d) The quality control of documents as a matter of due diligence;

(e) The detailed technical evaluation of proposals submitted by vendors as part of bidding exercises for the provision of corporate translation services, conducted under the direct supervision and control of the Procurement Division;

(f) The provision of access to gText, which offers the same computer-assisted translation tools to contractual and in-house translators.

71. The global terminology asset of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is being updated and gradually consolidated. As part of that effort, at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the language services engaged in direct consultations with OHCHR staff, and OHCHR were provided with access to the Geneva terminology database to streamline and align the use of terms. In addition, an ad hoc task force has been created at Headquarters to migrate the content of the specific language terminology databases into the United Nations terminology reference system, UNTERM. Terminology records are accessible to all language staff, including interpreters, through a terminology portal and are also available for translators through computer-assisted translation tools.

72. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management took full note of the request by the General Assembly in paragraph 103 of its resolution 68/251 to refrain from making any changes of a substantive nature to agreed texts of both draft and adopted resolutions, and will ensure full compliance.

73. A broad range of measures to enhance the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of editorial and related services provided by the Secretariat are being implemented in the current biennium for the period 2014-2015, including:

(a) Updated and strengthened application of submission standards for all United Nations documents;

(b) Enhanced author outreach, including through online training, improved models and templates and specialized instructions and interaction via a dedicated author website;

(c) Enhanced global document management, including standardized editorial guidelines and practices at all duty stations and updated document formats;

(d) Consolidated editorial and editorial support capacities and functions;

(e) Consolidated global terminology production and maintenance through UNTERM;

(f) Enhanced dissemination of United Nations documents to web-based media and mobile devices.

74. In the context of the costing models, representatives of the four duty stations have met frequently by videoconference to update the existing methodology for estimating costs for conference services. A number of technical adjustments deriving from the latest agreements with the International Association of Conference Interpreters and International Association of Conference Translators, the impact of increased digital distribution of documentation and reduction in international recruitment of freelance staff will be proposed. Other issues remain under discussion, including whether to have a global cost per page (330 words) for translation in recognition of integrated global management and workload sharing across the duty stations, or retain the current approach of a separate cost for each duty station.

75. Since 2010, the Secretariat has been posting on the respective websites of the Security Council sanctions committees in the six official languages of the United Nations the lists of individuals and entities subject to Security Council sanctions in connection with Somalia/Eritrea, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, Libya, Guinea-Bissau, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

76. Furthermore, in accordance with paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2082 (2012) and paragraph 17 of resolution 2083 (2012), the narrative summaries of reasons for the listing of all individuals and entities on the Al-Qaida Sanctions List and the 1988 (2011) Sanctions List are made publicly accessible in the six official languages on the Security Council's website. Since 2010, 371 summaries have been posted for the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, and 159

for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), amounting to over 3,180 pages made available in the six official languages.

77. Since the report of the Secretary-General to the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly (A/68/122), the translation of the sanctions lists of individuals and entities into the six official languages was raised in the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and the 1988 (2011) Sanctions Committee. The Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions of the Security Council also discussed the subject, at the request of the Chair of the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. The Secretariat provided requested information for the consideration of the Informal Working Group and the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and briefed the Informal Working Group in February and May 2014. On 17 June 2014, the Security Council adopted resolutions 2160 (2014) and 2161 (2014) pertaining to the 1988 (2011) and the Al-Qaida sanctions regimes, respectively. In those resolutions, the Council requested that the Secretary-General make the list entries and narrative summaries for the regimes available in all official languages of the United Nations, noting the unique circumstances of the request, for the purpose of harmonizing practices across all sanctions committees.

78. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management will make every effort to ensure that all list entries and narrative summaries of reasons for listing are made available in all official languages of the United Nations in a timely and accurate manner.